



## PEARSON'S FOCUSMATH PROGRAM: STUDY DESCRIPTION

### INTRODUCTION

Now more than ever, educators depend on high-quality educational products that address teaching and learning needs, foster effective instructional practices, and increase student achievement. Most importantly, educators need research-based evidence and information regarding educational products in order to make critical decisions about instruction and learning. Pearson strongly believes that its products must demonstrate proven effectiveness in increasing student learning. As such, it has contracted with Magnolia Consulting, LLC, an external, independent consulting firm (for more information, visit: [www.magnoliaconsulting.org](http://www.magnoliaconsulting.org)) specializing in educational research and evaluation, to conduct an independent efficacy study of its intervention math curriculum materials.

*focusMATH* is a K-6 math intervention program that provides intensive instruction to at-risk students as part of any Response to Intervention (RTI) framework. It addresses the individual needs of students performing significantly below grade level by focusing on (1) explicit and systematic lessons built on the NCTM Focal Points, (2) balanced instructional models and strategic questioning to promote student verbalization, and (3) individualized instruction through targeted placement and ongoing progress monitoring. Program components include consumable student workbooks, one Teacher's Edition, and materials kits. The curriculum provides approximately 16 weeks of instructional support and can be used as a pull-out intervention.

Magnolia Consulting is recruiting 2-4 schools in each district to use the *focusMATH* program in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades. It is preferred that paraprofessionals (not classroom teachers) spend 40 minutes a day, 2-3 days per week—in addition to students' regular math block—implementing the *focusMATH* program with students in small groups. The *focusMATH* program provides math facilitators with a product orientation before implementation followed by a full-day training four to six weeks into the study and an optional third full-day training, if needed.

### STUDY PURPOSE & DESIGN

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the *focusMATH* materials in helping students to attain critical math skills in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades. Specifically, the study will assess the effect of the materials on student achievement and self efficacy in math and measure math facilitators' implementation of the materials. In this study, *focusMATH* will be delivered by paraprofessionals, student teachers or other school-level instructional staff who have experience in providing direct instruction and who can commit to the full study period. The study employs a randomized control design to measure the impact of the *focusMATH* materials on student learning and self efficacy in math. That is, evaluators will *randomly assign* students who qualify for Tier III math intervention within a class to participate in the *focusMATH* program as a pull-out intervention. Therefore, some students within a class will participate in the *focusMATH* program (treatment group) and others will receive only classroom math instruction, but not math intervention (control group).

Evaluators will collect both math facilitator and student data from all participants regardless of assignment to treatment or control condition. Data collection focuses on student and math facilitator characteristics, materials implementation, and student learning and self-efficacy. Evaluators will employ the following data collection activities for the study:

- ❖ Two site visits (e.g., fall 2010 and spring 2011) for observations (lasting approximately 40 minutes) and interviews (lasting approximately 20 minutes) with math facilitators;

- ❖ Weekly online math facilitator implementation logs (approximately 10 minutes completion time per week);
- ❖ Individually-administered math student assessment (three administrations, approximately 50 minutes administration time); and
- ❖ Whole group student self efficacy survey (three administrations; approximately 10-15 minutes completion time per administration).

Pearson will hire trained test administrators to administer the student math assessment. Math facilitators will administer the student efficacy survey. Magnolia Consulting and Pearson will coordinate the purchase, delivery, and scoring of the student measures.

## PARTICIPATION

Evaluators will expect math facilitators to participate in all aspects of the study. For their full participation, math teachers will receive the *focusMATH* materials and training free of charge. Math facilitators who implement the *focusMATH* program with students also will receive a \$150 stipend. School- and district-level site coordinators will receive \$150 for their contributions to the study. A math teacher facilitating *focusMATH* can also serve as the school coordinator in a participating school. If preferred, stipends can be presented in the form of a gift certificate.

Evaluators will ask all participants to sign an informed consent form that delineates the expectations and responsibilities set forth by Magnolia Consulting for participants. *Magnolia Consulting protects participant confidentiality and anonymity and will adhere to district processes and requirements for human subjects review as well as those of Magnolia Consulting.*

## STUDY BENEFITS

Participation in the study is an exciting opportunity for educators to contribute to the effectiveness of the *focusMATH* materials in improving student learning—not only for their own students, but for students nationwide who stand to benefit from the materials. It is also a chance for educators to participate in a rigorous study that will contribute to a research body of evidence for *focusMATH*. Each district will receive a copy of the final report and student assessment results.

Magnolia Consulting understands the practical realities of conducting studies with schools and educators while adhering to the highest possible research standards. Evaluators are aware of the considerable demands on participants' time and appreciate their thoughtful consideration of this effort. Please contact Dr. Stephanie Baird Wilkerson (434.984.5540 or [stephanie@magnoliaconsulting.org](mailto:stephanie@magnoliaconsulting.org)) or Dr. Mary Styers (540.718.2142 or [mary@magnoliaconsulting.org](mailto:mary@magnoliaconsulting.org)), if you have questions regarding this study.

To complete a study application, please click [here](#).

